



BetterSafe

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

Maintaining Balance

A LOOK AT BALANCE DISORDERS

A balance disorder is a condition that makes you feel unsteady or dizzy. If you are standing, sitting, or lying down, you might feel as if you are moving, spinning, or floating. If you are walking, you might suddenly feel as if you are tipping over.

Everyone has a dizzy spell now and then, but the term “dizziness” can mean different things to different people. For one person, dizziness might mean a fleeting feeling of faintness, while for another it could be an intense sensation of spinning (vertigo) that lasts a long time.

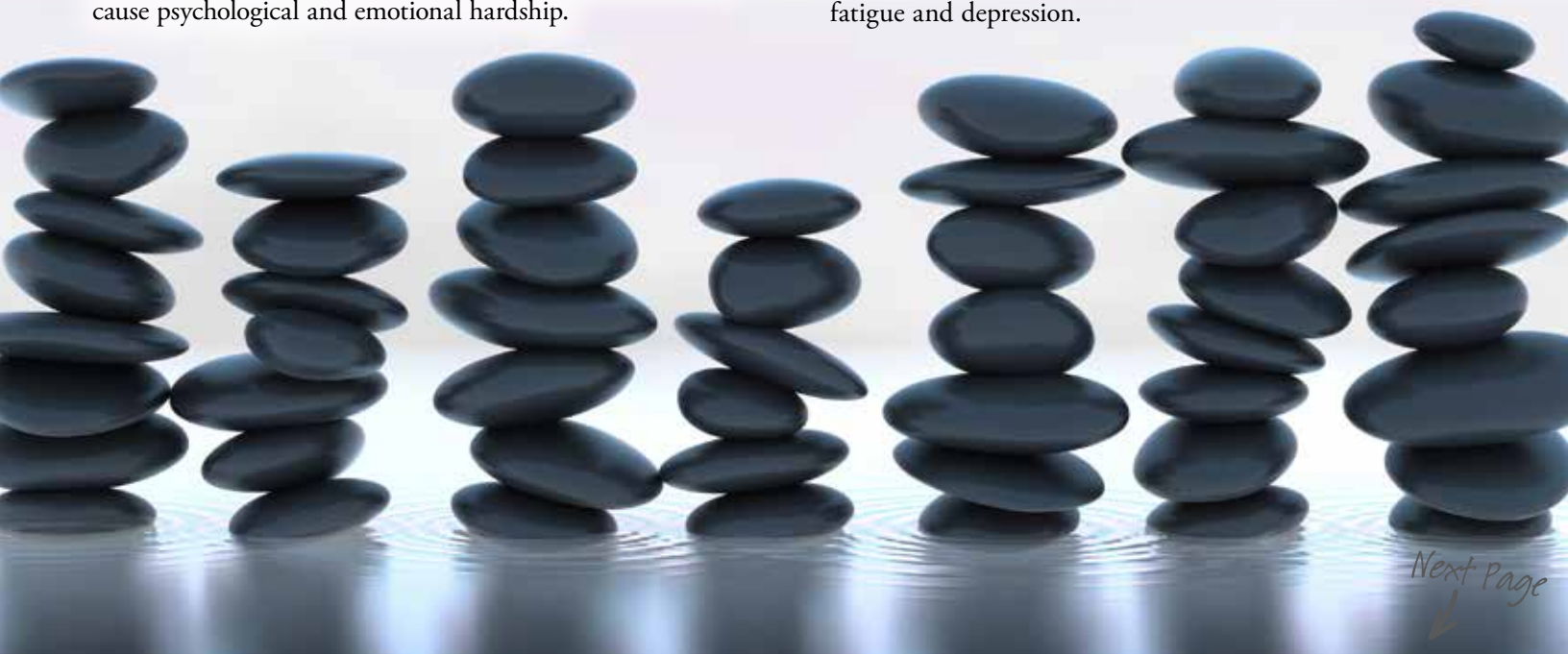
Experts believe that more than four out of 10 Americans, sometime in their lives, will experience an episode of dizziness significant enough to send them to a doctor. Balance disorders can be caused by certain health conditions, medications, or a problem in the inner ear or the brain. A balance disorder can profoundly impact daily activities and cause psychological and emotional hardship.

What Are The Symptoms Of A Balance Disorder?

If you have a balance disorder, you may stagger when you try to walk, or teeter or fall when you try to stand up. You might experience other symptoms such as:

- Dizziness or vertigo (a spinning sensation)
- Falling or feeling as if you are going to fall
- Lightheadedness, faintness, or a floating sensation
- Blurred vision
- Confusion or disorientation

Other symptoms might include nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, changes in heart rate and blood pressure, and fear, anxiety, or panic. Symptoms may come and go over short time periods or last for a long time, and can lead to fatigue and depression.



Next Page
↓



BetterSafe

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

Continued from previous page

What Causes Balance Disorders?

There are many causes of balance problems, such as medications, ear infections, a head injury, or anything else that affects the inner ear or brain. Low blood pressure can lead to dizziness when you stand up too quickly. Problems that affect the skeletal or visual systems, such as arthritis or eye muscle imbalance, can also cause balance disorders. Your risk of having balance problems increases as you get older.

Unfortunately, many balance disorders start suddenly and with no obvious cause.

How Does My Body Keep Its Balance?

Your sense of balance relies on a series of signals to the brain from several organs and structures in the body, which together are known as the vestibular system. The vestibular system begins with a maze-like structure in your inner ear called the labyrinth, which is made of bone and soft tissue.

How Are Balance Disorders Treated?

The first thing a doctor will do if you have a balance problem is determine if another health condition or a medication is to blame. If so, your doctor will treat the condition, suggest a different medication, or refer you to a specialist if the condition is outside his or her expertise.

When Should I Seek Help?

To help you decide whether to seek medical help for a dizzy spell, ask yourself the following questions. If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, talk to your doctor:

- Do I feel unsteady?
- Do I feel as if the room is spinning around me?
- Do I feel as if I'm moving when I know I'm sitting or standing still?
- Do I lose my balance and fall?
- Do I feel as if I'm falling?
- Do I feel lightheaded or as if I might faint?
- Do I have blurred vision?
- Do I ever feel disoriented—losing my sense of time or location?

